

[John W. Healey, Catherine Healey]

Copy -1 1938-9 Mass. [? ?] 14

Name: Jane K. Leary, 32 Acorn St.

Informant: John W. Healey.

Catherine Healey, wife of above.

Frank Healey, son of above.

Subject: The Shoeworker of Lynn

(Description of Informant's character and living conditions)

This informant, his wife and one bachelor son live in the second story of a three story house or "tenement." It is located in a section of West Lynn that is mainly a strong-hold of middleclass Irish folk.

A fair sprinkling of the very old of this section were born in Ireland; most of those under sixty years of age, however, were Lynn born of Irish parents.

Aunt Mary was born in northern New York state State of native Irish parents. Her husband was born in Ireland. All of their children were born in Lynn and the two surviving members of a family of six children still live there.

Jimmie, the married son lives in "the first floor tenement" of the house. The third floor or "attic tenement" is rented also.

In Uncle Jimmie's home, as in many other Irish homes in Lynn, the kitchen is the living room as well as the room to eat and cook in. True, there is besides, a dining room, a parlor

Library of Congress

and bedrooms, and they are all fitted out comfortably and a bit showily with a profusion of lamps, dishes in china 2 closet, pictures, thick nap parlor rug, etc. The kitchen, however, is the most important room for it has really been lived in.

It is clean but not immaculate; rather there is a sort of comfortable disarray about it; magazines here, books there, and a radio near enough to have the dial reached from an easy chair.

This daily use of the kitchen for all practical purposes except sleeping, originated undoubtedly in the days when money was scarce and the heating of an entire flat a distant luxury. When it became cold, a family would "shut off" all rooms not absolutely necessary to use.

A formal caller is, of course, let in through the front door and taken to the parlor. It would be unheard of, for instance, to take the parish priest to the kitchen on the occasion of his annual visit. The friend whom the family feels at ease with, however, sits at the kitchen table, sups strong tea and eats cake - always a bit of the best that the household affords. Usually too, he is not left to return home without a small portion of chili sauce, pepper relish, a glass of jam or jelly. If a child accompanies him on the call, the latter will very likely leave with a bag of cookies from Aunt Mary and a nickle or dime from Uncle Jimmie.

3

Usually too, the caller brings some small delicacy to Aunt Mary. The caller believes "one should never go empty handed" to a house; the hostess, on the other hand, "must give the house a good name."

Aunt Mary and Uncle Jimmie are meticulously honest. The money they have saved week by week through the years. They have a small income today from rental of that part of the house which they do not use, and from two garages. They are very close mouthed

Library of Congress

about their personal affairs, but probably remembering how many sacrifices that went into the saving of their old age nest egg, they now spend it carefully.

They are not, however, "on the tight side," for they are always doing some small thing for somebody in need. Aunt Mary usually has an interest in the affairs of some over-burdened mother to whom she will carry things for the children. Frequently, these are clothing that she has fashioned from something she has in her home.

They are both beloved from one end of the street to the other.